



Nebraska Department of Agriculture Specialty Crop Block Grant Program Final Performance Report (FY 2006)

CONTACTS

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Nebraska Woody Florals

Project Summary

Nebraska Woody Florals is a non-stock cooperative consisting of 32 independent, farm-based family businesses. It experienced exceptional growth in recent years, increasing annual product sales by 75 percent. The biggest challenge this cooperative faced was growing current markets and entering into new ones in an effort to increase sales revenue. Their market was small and market expansion and research was essential to enable this organization to become successful, sustainable, and profitable. Nebraska Woody Florals initiated several projects to address these issues and to increase the opportunities for Nebraska producers of woody floral products.

Project Approach

These issues were approached by utilizing three primary methods. They were as follows:

1. Market Expansion. This issue was addressed by hiring a marketing specialist on a contractual basis. A contracted position devoted to marketing enabled the group to increase sales and enter new markets. New marketing materials and creation of a web site helped support these efforts.
2. Brand Awareness. The group increased brand awareness by attending industry trade shows and conducting follow-up visits with contacts established at the shows.
3. Research. Efforts focused on establishing a new product line, which was explored by working in partnership with the University of Nebraska – Lincoln (UNL). The new product line was frozen fresh cut, dormant stems. Research proved that it is possible to extend the shelf life of fresh cut, dormant stems by using a freezer set at 28 °F to preserve the products. The reception of the product was very favorable. Last year, one of their wholesalers agreed to carry the new frozen product, allowing their consumers with the ability to source products 12 months out of the year. Frozen products filled an industry demand for fresh cut, dormant stems during the late spring and early summer seasons.

Growing the market for Nebraska Woody Florals provide agricultural producers with diversity in farm products, an increase in rural income, and on-farm employment.

Goals and Outcomes Achieved

The goals of the project were to increase existing markets, develop new products, and expand into new markets. Below is a description of how these goals were accomplished.

1. Marketing Representative. In an effort to increase the number of wholesalers and sales, the cooperative wrote a job description for a marketing representative. The position was advertised, candidates were interviewed, and an individual was hired on a part-time, contractual basis. The representative took a training course, which was completed in December 2007. Her work has been very productive and well received by cooperative customers.
2. Fresh Stem Market Expansion. The marketing representative's activity plan focused on building relationships and confidence with current and prospective new customers. This was achieved through "cold calling" and trade show participation.
3. Web Page Development. The cooperative developed a web page, which was launched in June 2008. The web page can be viewed at www.nebraskawoodyflorals.com. Prior to the establishment of the web site, all members had an opportunity to provide input regarding page design and content information.
4. Promotional/Sales Materials. The cooperative worked with one of their major wholesalers to develop and design full color, glossy promotional materials to use with other wholesalers and end users of their products. This information will increase the awareness of the cooperative and the products they offer.
5. Trade Shows. The new marketing representative, and some of the growers and board members, attended three regional trade shows where contact was established with potential customers. Two of the shows, the Omaha Garden Show and the Fruit and Nut Jam, focused on selling products to consumers. The Western Nursery and Landscape Show in Overland Park, Kansas, focused exclusively on selling nursery and landscape products to wholesalers. Participation at the trade shows aided in increasing brand awareness and the cooperative's products.
6. The research, conducted in cooperation with the Nebraska Forest Service and the Kimmel Education Center, was a huge success. Research proved that it is possible to extend the shelf life of fresh cut, dormant stems by using a freezer to preserve the products. The cooperative will carefully implement the results of this study to ensure they do not meet any unexpected outcomes that the study did not take into account when performing the research.

Beneficiaries

Suppliers and customers of woody floral products were the beneficiaries of this project. Fresh cut stem sales for harvest year 2007, which ended in May 2008, increased by 37 percent, compared to 2006. This resulted in an increase of 49 percent in gross revenue. Projected sales for 2008 were 58,379 stems, which equates to \$35,419 in total revenue, an increase in both areas, compared to previous years. Projected sales for 2008 were conservative, but the cooperative fully expected to exceed 2007 sales. The number of growers in the cooperative has increased to 42 members, which is a 31 percent increase, compared to previous years.

The web site is a new communication tool that can now be utilized by members and growers alike. The promotional material was distributed at the trade shows they attended and will be handed out at various public events to inform audiences of the cooperative and their respective products.

This cooperative is a great option for purchasing woody floral products grown in the Midwest. In November of 2008, sales were up almost 40 percent, compared to the previous year.

Lessons Learned

Hiring the marketing representative was a key link that aided in the growth and profitability of this organization. This individual has built the customer base from 7 wholesalers in 3 markets to 16 wholesalers in 11 markets. A portion of this growth emerged because of the representative's determination to showcase Nebraska's quality products to the owners of a large, regional floral wholesaler.

The cooperative has established themselves as "the fresh, high-quality woody floral provider." This year, the group was well on their way to set new success records. However, in the recession, stem sales were down significantly in January and February of 2009, and sales have leveled off to where they were in 2008. Their reputation, along with their expanding trade territory and customer base, will enable this cooperative to weather this downturn, and they will be well positioned to take advantage of the market when the upswing engages.

The web page is fully functional. A training video section was recently added, which will be promoted to their wholesale customers. Wholesalers are encouraged to promote the web site to their retail customers to educate how woody floral products can be used to make unique floral arrangements. Over time, the web site will be used as a marketing and educational tool available to cooperative members and customers alike.

A full-color, glossy promotional piece was created to promote products to the cooperative's wholesalers and customers. The paraphernalia was well received and was distributed at the trade shows they attended.

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Additional Information

Nebraska Woody Florals received \$26,033 in Fiscal Year 2006 Specialty Crop Block Grant Program (SCBGP) funds. These funds have been fully expended. To access the Nebraska Woody Florals web site, go to www.nebraskawoodyflorals.com.

Nebraska Dry Beans

Project Summary

The Nebraska Dry Bean Commission's primary function is to adopt and devise a dry bean program consisting of research, education, advertising, publicity, and promotion to increase total consumption of dry beans on a state, national, and international basis. Nebraska is the largest supplier of Great Northern Beans (GNB) in the nation. Pinto, Navy, Black, and GNB account for approximately 74 percent of the dry edible beans produced in the United States. Dry edible bean consumption has increased over the past 20 years due to the growing Hispanic population, and the improved awareness of the health benefiting properties of beans. Research has linked a number of nutrients found in beans to cardiovascular health and cancer prevention.

Despite this success and potential health benefiting properties, damaged beans that are split, cracked, or broken during harvest are typically used for animal feed, decreasing the overall value of the bean. Depending upon market conditions, the difference in feed to food value can be more than \$20 per hundredweight, which is a loss of more than 92 percent of its value.

Project Approach

While whole GNB are typically marketed for human consumption, primitive research hinted to the fact that damaged beans might have some health-benefitting properties. Therefore, this project evaluated the nutritional value of damaged dry edible beans to determine their value as a human health food ingredient. Research focused on the composition of damaged GNB to determine if any health-promoting components existed. If so, the results were to be compared against the results of the whole GNB composition. Favorable nutritional value research results of damaged dry edible beans would likely position the state's dry edible bean industry for a role in the growing functional food or nutraceuticals market, thus, improving the overall marketability and value of the crop.

Phytochemicals present in dry edible beans have been shown to exert multiple disease preventative properties, with natural antioxidants playing a significant role. Among these compounds, Vitamin E, carotenoids, flavonoids, anthocyanins, and phenolic acids exhibit high antioxidative capacities. However, the effect of damage imposed by harvesting and processing resulting in split beans was yet to be evaluated. Therefore, the need was addressed by identifying the antioxidant agents and other health-promoting compounds present in damaged GNBs, as compared to their undamaged counterparts. Split and whole GNBs were characterized for two major groups of health impacting components, which included lipids and polyphenols.

Goals and Outcomes Achieved

The goal of the dry bean project was to characterize split, or damaged, GNBs as a potential source of health-promoting, natural antioxidants. The project was achieved via three specific aims. They were as follows:

1. Characterize and compare the lipid composition of split and whole GNBs.
2. Characterize and compare the phenol composition of split and whole GNBs.
3. Determine and compare the antioxidative capacity of the lipid extracts and the phenol extracts of split and whole GNBs.

The aims were accomplished using several different laboratory extraction experiments and analytical procedures.

Under the first aim, hexane and diethyl ether extracted lipids were analyzed for steryl esters, free sterols, triacylglycerides, free fatty acids, and policosanols through the use of a chromatography. The natural antioxidants present in the lipid extracts were determined as Vitamin E, carotene, and carotenoids. For the second aim, polar extracts were obtained by first subjecting ground raw material to either water, methanol, or acetone to obtain free polyphenols, followed by hydrolyzing the remaining solid with dilute acid to obtain the bound polyphenols. Total phenols, flavonoids, and anthocyanins were then, respectively, assessed by the Folin-Ciocalteu method, the polyvinylpyrrolidone method, and reverse phase HPLC-ultraviolet detection. Each sample was analyzed in triplicate and identified or quantitated versus external standards. Additional studies were completed. Results from previous tests suggested differences in the bean composition, which may predispose the bean to harvest/post-harvest damage. Lastly, antioxidant capacities of the cited extracts were determined using the Oxygen Radical Absorbance Capacity (ORAC) tests.

Beneficiaries

As a result of this project, specific classes and the amount of lipids and phenol groups that exhibit antioxidant properties were identified in the split GNBs. Secondly, science-based results support and, therefore, can be used to promote, the consumption of split GNBs. The phytochemical composition and the effects of the antioxidative properties due to a split versus whole GNB will be forthcoming.

Two publications are in preparation from this work, which will address either the lipid or the polyphenols composition profiles of split compared to whole GNBs. The Commission further anticipates using preliminary data generated from this project to leverage funding to support research on direct health links to split beans and/or for the development of dietary products incorporating split beans and/or their natural antioxidants.

Lessons Learned

Laboratory analysis enabled completion of the third aim of this project. Significant levels of potent antioxidative components were present in the split beans. They contained bioactive agents that have been linked to heart health, gut health, and anticancer properties. The results further showed that split versus whole GNB, contained different quantities of select bioactive agents. For example, the whole GNBs was composed of slightly, but significantly, higher levels of Vitamin E and bound polyphenols, compared to the split GNB, but lower free polyphenols when extracted with acetone and water. The antioxidant capacity data showed slightly higher bioactivity for both methanol and water extract of the whole GNB, compared to the split GNB, but was similar for the free methanol extracted counterparts. However, the antioxidant capacity for the split beans was higher for both free and bound acetone and water extracts. Results suggest that split versus whole beans contain different types of polyphenols and lipid profiles, which, in turn, affect their antioxidant capacities when subjected to different extraction processes. However, these results indicate only minor differences in the composition of the bean. Consequently, research confirms the theory that using split beans as a human dietary source is feasible.

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Additional Information

The Nebraska Dry Bean Commission received \$26,033 in Fiscal Year 2006 Specialty Crop Block Grant Program (SCBGP) funds. These funds have been fully expended. Two publications are in preparation from this work, which will address either the lipid or the polyphenols composition profiles of split GNBs compared to whole GNBs.

Nebraska Potato Development

Project Summary

Of the 20,000 acres of potatoes grown in Nebraska, 6,007 acres are seed potatoes. Seed potatoes, for both domestic and international export, must be certified through both visual and laboratory testing as part of the state's Potato Certification Program. This program is conducted by the Potato Certification Association of Nebraska (PCAN), a non-stock, non-profit growers association, and is self-supported through fees paid by the seed potato growers. The program manager's primary function is to diagnose field and storage diseases of potatoes.

The program manager was nearing retirement, and there was an approaching need to find a replacement. The expertise required for this position cannot be obtained in a classroom, and since only 15 states have seed potato certification programs, there was a limited pool of experienced, trained individuals who could serve as the replacement. While seed potato growers increased certification fees to raise funds to help train the replacement, more funding was needed to retain an individual with the appropriate educational background. A further increase in fees to cover the full cost of training an individual would have put the seed potato growers at a disadvantage as they struggle to compete in the domestic and North American markets due to the influx of cheaper seed potatoes from Canada. Consequently, grant funding was used to support the training of a new manager for the program.

Project Approach

PCAN advertised, interviewed, and hired an individual who served as the assistant manager or manager trainee.

PCAN advertised this position through several different avenues. A job description of this position was sent to all potato certification agencies and horticulture and plant pathology departments that conduct extensive research on potatoes in the U.S. and Canada. This position was also published in one or two trade magazines. This position was advertised for five months. The populations targeted consisted of potato researchers.

The desired qualifications for this position included training, supervision, and inspections related to field, storage, shipping point, and phytosanitary assessments of Nebraska certified seed potatoes. Planning, implementation, and evaluation of all

summer virus tests, as well as post-harvest testing of Nebraska seed lots were required as responsibilities for this position. Other qualifications included staying abreast of potato disease issues and disseminating the appropriate information to the Nebraska seed potato industry. This included participating in strain, varietal disease response, or production trials on seed potatoes. The manager assumes the responsibility that all Nebraska certified seeds meet the requirements set forth in the rules and regulations pertinent to PCAN. Qualified candidates with Doctoral, Master's, or Bachelor's degrees were preferred. A high school diploma, plus years of certification experience, was also considered. Applicants with potato certification or potato experience were the primary candidates. Communication, diplomacy, and management skills were important to this position, as was character, personality, and integrity. The candidate must have received the approval of the Certification Committee of the University of Nebraska.

The candidate chosen for this position had a strong background, technical knowledge, and proven track record of running a comparable program in North Dakota. The candidate chosen for this position was well received by the potato industry.

The retiring manager provided the training. Two years of training, both in the laboratory and in the field, were conducted. On-the-job training was used to obtain experience and knowledge in field diagnosis, disease testing and shipping point and phytosanitary inspections. The trainee became well versed in potato pathology, entomology, and agronomy. The individual received training from the USDA's Agricultural Marketing Service (AMS) regarding inspection and auditing. The retiring manager and the potato producers oriented the new individual to Nebraska's program. Cooperation with PCAN's certified public accountant provided assistance as to how to maintain a budget and provide financial reports to the Association. Dialog with the various partners associated with PCAN ensued.

The position was essential for the Association. The position, for all practical purposes, pertains to the seed potato certification program in Nebraska. The position is responsible for all USDA AMS potato inspections. This includes seed potato shipping point inspections in Nebraska and official lot evaluation inspections, which are needed for crop insurance claims. This serves as the official quality and phytosanitary inspections for exports. This individual is the only USDA AMS GAP/GHP inspector/auditor in Nebraska. Inspections are available to all potato growers in Nebraska.

Goals and Outcomes Achieved

The goals of the potato project were to maintain the health of the potato crop and to maintain existing seed potato acres by training a new manager for the Nebraska potato certification program.

The Association generated \$50,000 to accomplish their goal. The \$25,000 in SCBGP funding was matched with the Association's \$25,000, which originated from the

program's increase in potato certification fees. Combined, this funding enabled PCAN to hire an individual to serve as the Association's assistant manager. SCBGP funding from the fiscal year 2007 funding cycle was granted to PCAN to assist with the funding of the second year of training the assistant manager or manager trainee. Once the training was complete, the assistant manager became the new program manager of PCAN. The new program manager officially started on July 1, 2009.

Beneficiaries

The seed potato industry in Nebraska generates approximately \$3 million, annually, to the state's agricultural economy. There are 9 certified seed growing operations and 16 commercial potato growers in Nebraska. The commercial growers harvested 19,400 acres of potatoes in 2006. Nearly 100 percent of the seed potatoes used to plant these commercial acres originated from Nebraska's nine certified seed potato operations. The growers and certified growing operations will benefit now that Nebraska's new program manager has been hired and trained. PCAN is committed toward their goal of keeping the industry viable.

Lessons Learned

In the first year of training, PCAN raised its acreage fee \$5 per acre. Because there are approximately 5,000 acres annually, \$25,000 should have been collected to pay for the training program. Unfortunately, Nebraska experienced a drop in 1,000 acres from the previous year. This was partially due to the fact that the seed potato growers were unable to cash rent irrigated circles to plant potatoes. The high prices for corn and wheat made cash rent prices unattractive to Nebraska farmers, thus, having a negative effect on seed potato acreage and certification revenue. The funding from SCBGP was critical to keep the industry going and the training of a new manager, which assisted the industry in setting goals and certification of product.

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Additional Information

PCAN received \$26,033 in Fiscal Year 2006 Specialty Crop Block Grant Program (SCBGP) funds. These funds have been fully expended.

Nebraska Rural Initiative

Project Summary

One of the challenges fresh fruit and vegetable growers face is development of marketing venues for specialty crops. On the other end of the commercial spectrum, consumers are increasingly looking for fresh, local foods, but often cannot find enough product to consistently meet their needs. Over the past few years, several new marketing venues have been established in an effort to solve this dilemma. Each venue has its own niche and continues to evolve.

The Nebraska Rural Initiative and the Food Processing Center worked cooperatively to use SCBGP funding to increase the awareness of the various marketing venues for specialty crops, with the overall goal being to increase the volume of specialty crops grown and the number of specialty crop producers in the state.

Project Approach

The project began by conducting a needs assessment survey of current food producers in Nebraska. The purpose was to gain a better understanding of producer needs, develop avenues with which to satisfy these needs, and assist in expanding the specialty crop industry. Information compiled from the surveys was used to identify the topics addressed at trainings and workshops. Results also revealed that producers preferred to receive information during the winter months. Although staff members from both UNL entities attended a workshop to learn how to create educational podcasts, this technology was looked upon less favorably by producers as ways to receive information. Producers prefer to receive information via workshops or conferences; information relayed via the Internet, newspaper, radio, television, podcasts, and DVD materials are least preferred. Also, producers indicated they were not as interested in topics that addressed production practices. Instead, they were more focused on how to source financial assistance opportunities and how to develop strategies with which to strengthen marketing and distribution channels. Combined, this information was used to establish the direction for the course of the project and aided in steering the efforts of the Nebraska Local Foods Network (NLFN).

Goals and Outcomes Achieved

The goals of this project were to increase the awareness of the marketing opportunities that exist for specialty crop producers, so existing producers realize the economic benefit through increased marketing and the number of specialty crop producers in Nebraska.

The Nebraska Local Foods Network (*NLFN*) is a collaboration of Nebraskans working together to encourage and facilitate the increased production and consumption of fresh

local foods. NLFN strives to build stronger communities, healthier lives, and a cleaner environment. NLFN is not a 501(c) 3 organization.

Based on the initial needs assessment conducted through telephone surveys of Nebraska fruit and vegetable producers, an on-line educational curriculum module was developed to assist Nebraska producers in marketing their produce at farmers' markets. This on-line curriculum specially focuses on assisting specialty crop producers. This module can be found at http://ruralinitiative.nebraska.edu/nebraska_foods/producers/educational_modules/index.html.

Six NLFN meetings were held that helped develop ideas to increase the production and consumption of local foods in Nebraska. The meetings started as a collaboration of UNL personnel and slowly expanded to encompass outside entities that have an interest in local foods.

Listed below is a breakdown of the number of attendees at each of NLFN's six workshops.

Date	Attendees
February 28, 2008	8
March 13, 2008	19
April 14, 2008	14
May 6, 2008	6
June 24, 2008	84
August 7, 2009	18

After the initial meetings, NLFN determined the need for a facilitation session to identify the ideas and challenges. To achieve this task, a professional facilitation consultant was hired to work with each of the three subcommittees (Production, Nutrition and Education, and Marketing/Distribution/Processing) to help move the committees through a planning and goal identification process. A fourth facilitation session was held with the steering team to develop long-term goals and measurable outcomes for NLFN.

Following the facilitation process, it was discovered that NLFN should become more organized and goal-oriented. Therefore, a few members of each of the subcommittees were asked to serve on a leadership team that helped finalize NLFN's goals and coordinate the efforts throughout each of the respective committees. The leadership team met once to identify the goals and begin collaboration. The leadership team is now meeting on a bi-monthly basis, and they plan to carry out their work while involving all members of the NLFN in an effort to expand production and consumption of local foods.

In addition to the meetings, an on-line clearing house was needed to host and supply educational information. A web site was developed which includes educational flash modules to help local food producers become more educated and successful when selling products at farmers' market stands. The web site is located at

www.localfoods.nebraska.edu and was rolled out during NLFN's "Local Foods Awareness Week, which took place during the first full week in July.

A promotional display and marketing materials were developed to help explain the various marketing venues and opportunities available to specialty crop producers. The display, which promotes Nebraska MarketMaker, Nebraska Food Cooperative, Buy Fresh Buy Local, and the Good Fresh Local Programs has been used at various meetings and conferences (i.e., MarketPlace Nebraska and Nebraska Ag Classic) to help bring awareness to specialty crop production. Promotional materials and brochures were developed to promote Nebraska MarketMaker. Nebraska MarketMaker and the Nebraska Food Cooperative have proved to be valuable marketing tools for producers. The web site, displays, and brochures increase the awareness of NLFN and works toward accomplishing its mission.

NLFN used SCBGP funds to enhance the competitiveness of specialty crops by inviting specialty crop producers to speak at the meetings and serve on the producer panels. A point was made to only invite horticultural crop producers at each event, so as to further the opportunities of specialty crops in Nebraska. The producers engaged in the facilitation and planning sessions were also horticultural crop producers. The Production Subcommittee of NLFN held a session with a trained facilitator to determine the needs of specialty crop producers. A few areas highlighted during the facilitation included:

- Developing a system involving producers and retailers to provide consistent, high-quality produce that is available over long periods of time;
- Identify individuals involved in horticultural crop production and those wanting to become involved in specialty crop production; and
- Educate youth and young adults to the opportunities in horticultural crop production and showcase it as a way for youth to return to the family farm that involves less inputs than conventional farming.

All of the areas recognized by the Production Subcommittee were areas that could indeed enhance the competitiveness of specialty crops. NLFN's subcommittee is working to put these ideas into action. In addition to listening to the needs of specialty crop producers, NLFN used the marketing materials funded through the grant to attend conferences in Nebraska and to speak with horticultural crop producers and consumers.

The formation of NLFN has increased the awareness and collaboration for local foods in Nebraska. The strong momentum of this group will continue to increase both production and consumption of local foods. NLFN has received additional grants, which will continue to build upon this initial grant project. It anticipates gaining more members and building stronger collaborations that will help specialty crop production in Nebraska.

Beneficiaries

The formation of NLFN was a great achievement resulting from this project. This organization increases the awareness of the opportunities that exist for specialty crop producers. It consists of a group of individuals who address various issues facing local food and specialty crop producers in Nebraska. They work on understanding the marketing, distribution, production, and educational hurdles that specialty crop producers face. Monthly meetings were held and grant funds were used to fund speakers at a local food workshop. This workshop highlighted the economic benefits of local food production. Representatives from food distribution companies helped explain how producers market local foods in Nebraska. Sixty-one percent of the attendees rated the workshop very valuable, and 39 percent said it was somewhat valuable. NLFN works to facilitate better marketing and distribution channels to provide consumers with easier access to specialty crops, thus, enabling producers to increase their sales and expand profit margins.

As described above, the display promoting Nebraska MarketMaker, the Nebraska Food Cooperative, Buy Fresh Buy Local, and the Good Fresh Local Program helps inform producers and potential specialty crop producers of marketing opportunities available to local food producers. Promotional materials and brochures were developed to promote Nebraska MarketMaker. The hits to this web site have increased to over 16,000 per month. The brochures have been distributed at events such as Marketplace Nebraska, Nebraska Ag Classic, and Nebraska Sustainable Ag Society's Annual Conference. The web site, displays, and brochures increase the awareness of NLFN, all of which are integral components of the marketing strategy NLFN is trying to facilitate.

Lessons Learned

There is great interest in local foods, but there is still a shortage of specialty crop producers. Marketing and distribution challenges appear to be the largest hurdles that need to be addressed as Nebraska attempts to increase specialty crop production.

Since there is an unmet demand for local foods, the majority of producers are more interested in selling directly to consumers, so they can receive a larger piece of the food dollar. Consequently, it is difficult to encourage producers to expand and sell on a wholesale basis. This will continue to be a challenge until production matches consumer demand.

In addition, there is not enough sufficient data available within the state to help individuals assess the marketing potential for specific crops. Nebraska Rural Initiative is currently providing financial support to fund two University positions, one focusing on developing specialty crop budgets and another for market research analysis within the food industry. These positions will be beneficial, as they continue to promote opportunities for specialty crop production in Nebraska.

Staff members from Nebraska Rural Initiative and the Food Processing Center attended a workshop to learn how to create podcasts. It was anticipated that podcasts would be excellent educational tools that would be useful to specialty crop producers. However, after compiling the results from the needs assessment survey, it was discovered that

podcasts were not a favorable, or preferred, method for producers to receive information. Therefore, it was decided that information be provided in a different format. Nevertheless, NLFN will eventually start adding podcasts to their web site, so it is accessible to producers who find it as a preferred means of obtaining information.

Although the original collaboration for this project consisted of UNL personnel, the inclusion of organizations and groups outside the University system, who have an interest in local foods, broadened the scope of this project. The inclusion of these groups delayed the establishment of NLFN.

One of the unexpected, but favorable responses, to this grant project was the interest shown from many different groups and individuals, both inside and outside the UNL system. There is a large interest in local foods, and the collaborations formed from this group will undoubtedly be beneficial to the opportunities that exist for specialty crop producers in Nebraska.

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Additional Information

Nebraska Rural Initiative was awarded \$26,034 in Fiscal Year 2006 SCBGP funds. In September 2008, a request for a three-month extension was granted by NDA to enable completion of this project. The end date was extended to December 31, 2008. All grant funds have been fully expended.

Workgroups were established to address local food production. Each workgroup is in the process of setting goals and objectives and all will continue to work towards expanding local food production and consumption in Nebraska.

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